Naval Stores

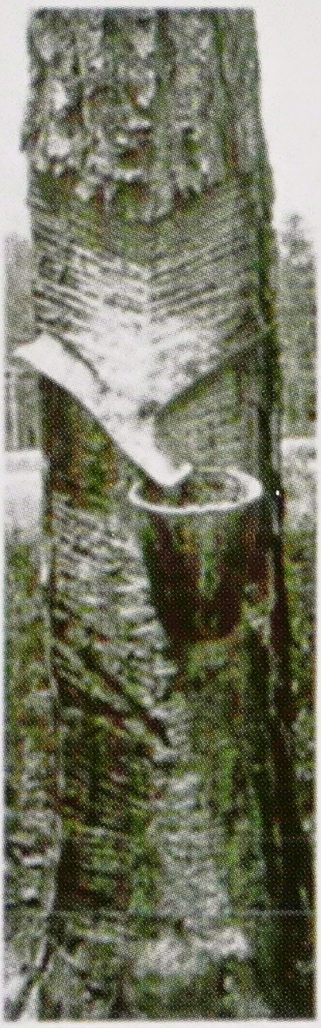
GPS Coordinates:
84° 9.869' W ~ 30° 5.282' N

Before Europeans settled the southeastern U.S., an estimated 90 million acres of longleaf pine forests blanketed the Coastal Plain from southern Virginia into east Texas and down Florida's peninsula. Longleaf pines were so dominant that people believed the forest would never disappear, but it almost did.

(Courtesy St. Marks Refuge files)

During spring and summer, workers dipped the gum and ladled it into barrels that were hauled to the turpentine still. The raw material was heated over open fires in copper kettles to produce the spirits. (Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida)

Pitch, produced by distilling gum from pines, is used to caulk holes in wooden boats. Longleaf pines produce more gum than other southern pines. Collectively, everything that is needed to outfit and keep a wooden ship afloat – pitch, masts, turpentine, rope, sails, and so on – is called Naval Stores. Turpentine was also used in medicines, cleaning products, paint, varnish, and a multitude of other products.



Clay Herty cup attached to a cat-faced pine (Courtesy State Archives of Florida)

When the bark is scraped from the trunk, gum begins oozing to protect the wound. The scrape is called a face or cat-face. A metal box or clay pot attached to the bottom of the wound collected the gum. The face was not allowed to heal and periodically the gum was collected

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and taken to the still. The stiller, who monitored the temperature of the kettle, and the cooper, who fashioned barrels, were two of the most important jobs.

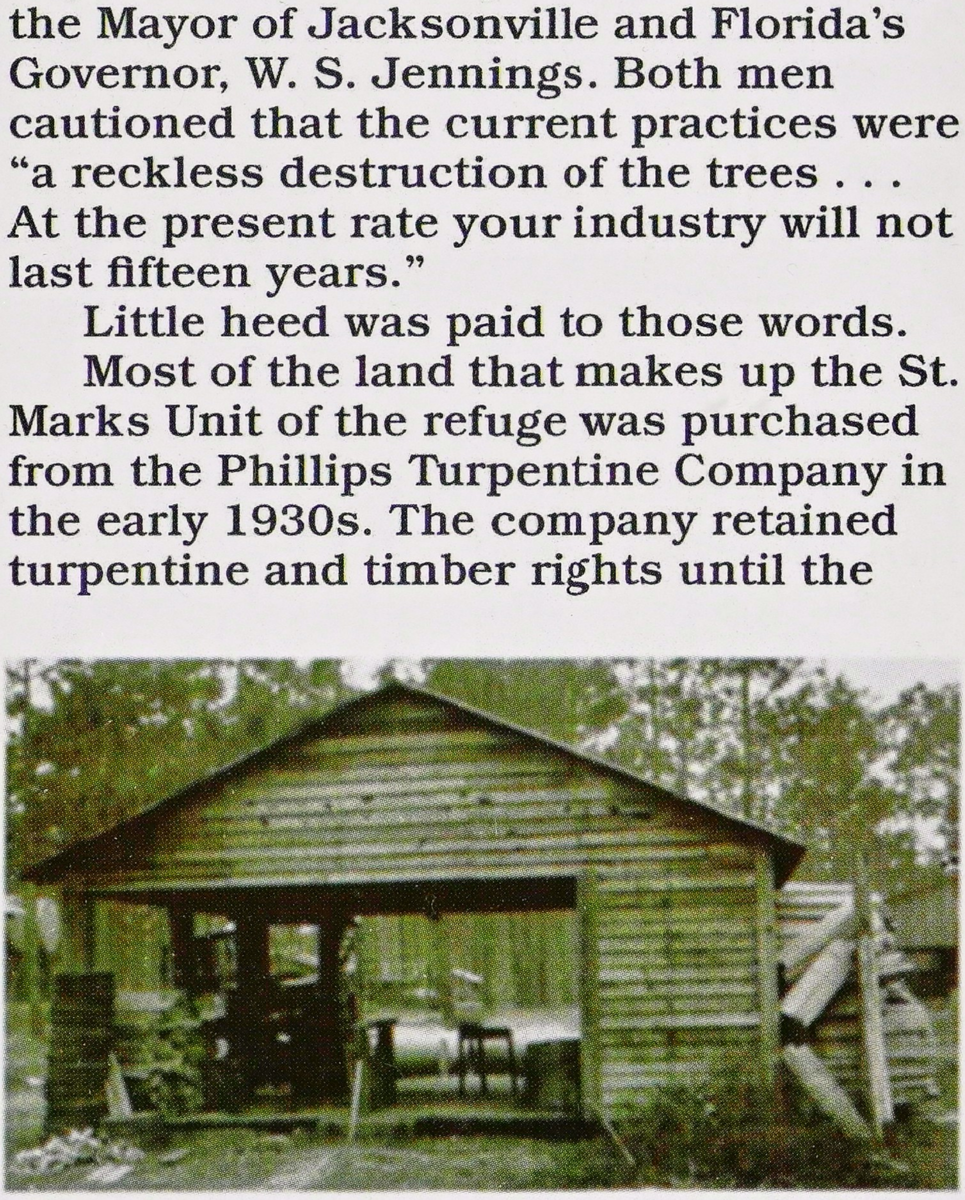
A stand of pines was called a crop. These magnificent trees were highly productive for only a few years and when production dropped off the timber was logged or abandoned. The camp and still were moved to another virgin forest, and the cycle began again.

North Carolina was the top turpentine producer for many years. As the pines gave out the turpentiners moved south but did not begin heavy exploitation of Florida's pinelands until the late 1800s.

When the first convention of the Turpentine Operators' Association met in September 1902, they were welcomed by the Mayor of Jacksonville and Florida's Governor, W. S. Jennings. Both men cautioned that the current practices were "a reckless destruction of the trees . . . At the present rate your industry will not last fifteen years."

Little heed was paid to those words.

Most of the land that makes up the St. Marks Unit of the refuge was purchased from the Phillips Turpentine Company in the early 1930s. The company retained turpentine and timber rights until the



Cooper's shed (Courtesy State Archives of Florida)

Collecting and distilling pine gum was hot and dirty work. The threat of fire was constant and many stills went up in flames. (Courtesy State Archives of Florida)

mid-1940s. A few cat-faced stumps and clay pots can still be found.

By the mid-1900s, managed rows of pine had replaced natural forests. The advent of steel ships and synthetic chemicals brought an end to commercial turpentine production, once the South's largest and most profitable industry.

The once seemingly endless longleaf forests along with many of the plants and animals that depended on the ecosystem have almost disappeared from the southern landscape. Fewer that 3 million acres of old growth longleaf pine forest have survived. Luckily modern land managers are working hard to restore the ecosystem. The best examples of longleaf pines on the refuge are on the Panacea Unit near the town of Panacea.

The St. Marks Refuge Association, Inc., with a matching grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, produced the signs and brochures for the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge History Trail. Th
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Shell Mounds

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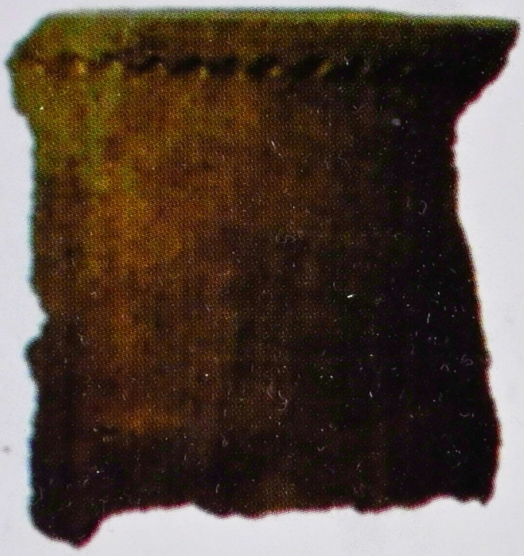
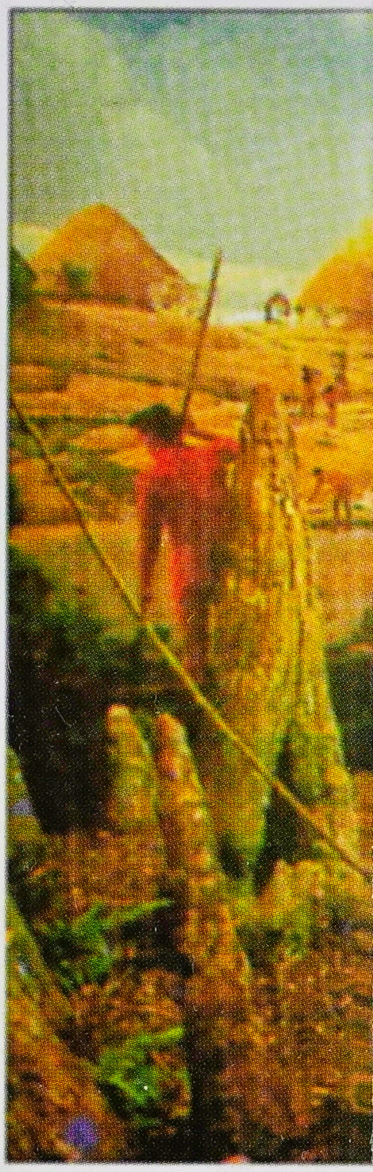


This piece of pottery dates from the recent Leon – Jefferson Period (1550-1750 A.D.). Artifacts such as pottery and tools recovered during archeological excavations provide clues about the culture of the various people who lived on this land thousands of years ago. Pottery is one of the signature markers for judging the age of a site. The style and composition of the clay evolved from a simple utilitarian design of the Archaic Period to finer, more artistic bowls, storage jars, or burial vessels with distinctive decorations and pigments that appeared in the Weeden Island Period. (Courtesy Florida Division of Historical Resources, Bureau of Archaeological Research)

The Paleo-Indian period lasted about 5,100 years between 13,000 and 7,900 B.C. About 40 Paleo-Indian sites occur near the refuge, mostly along the Aucilla River. Since more of Florida's land mass was exposed during that time it is likely that several sites are now under the water of Apalachee Bay.

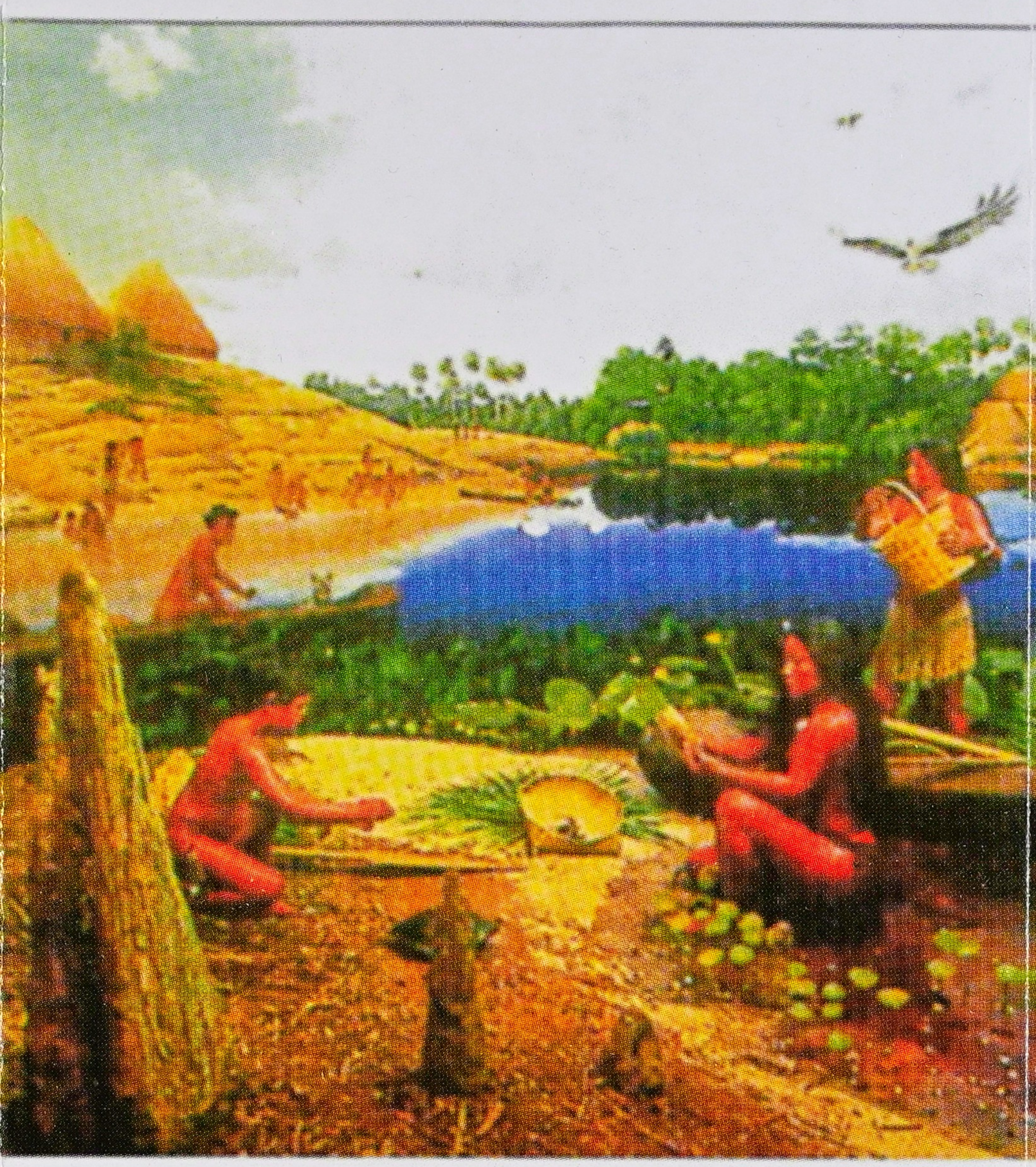
The Archaic Period, between 7,900 - 500 B.C., is divided into Early (7,900 - 5,000 B.C.), Middle (5,000 - 3,000 B.C.), and Late (3,000 - 500 B.C.). During this time some clans began to form small semi-permanent and permanent villages as well as hunting camps near coastal marshes and river systems. Bolen points, a distinctive form of arrowhead found in the southeastern U.S., and fiber tempered pottery appeared during this time period.



The Woodland Period, 500 B.C. - 900 A.D., is divided into three distinctive eras based on styles of pottery: Deptford (500 B.C. - 100 A.D.); Santa Rosa - Swift Creek (100 - 300 A.D.); and Weeden Island (300 - 900 A.D.). Native cultures became more organized during this period as indicated by elaborate ceremonial complexes, mound burials, permanent settlements, population growth, and organized societies.

The Mississippian - Fort Walton Period, 900 A.D. to the time of European contact, is characterized by the spread of temple mounds and

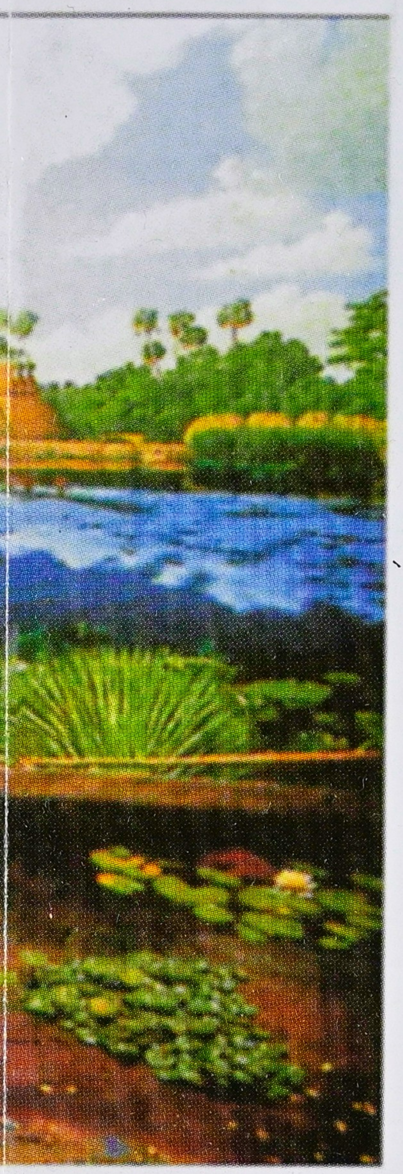
Shell Mounds



This diorama at the Museum of Florida History in Tallahassee shows what a village might have looked like around 1450.

the cultivation of crops such as corn, beans, and squash.

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge protects numerous ancient habitation sites; only a few were places of burial. A permanent village required access to a reliable food supply, the resources to build shelters, and a nearby source of fresh water. The coastal area now protected by the refuge supplied abundant varieties of seafood. The forests supplied firewood, small game, some edible plants, and shelter



materials. Fresh water was available from the St. Marks and Wakulla Rivers.

The Mounds Trail traverses an area that has been used since prehistoric times. The fire tower is built on a shell midden and evidence of the Deptford, Weeden Island, Swift Creek, and Fort Walton cultures have been discovered by archeological excavations. Humans have touched this land for more than 10,000 years. As you walk along, imagine the scent of wood smoke from a cooking fire and listen for the voices of people who lived in an ancient camp near the Mounds Trail.

The St. Marks Refuge Association, Inc., with a matching grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, produced the signs and brochures for the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge History Trail. The association is a 501(c)(3) organization that supports educational, environmental, and biological programs of St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. Visit www.stmarksrefuge.org for more information. 9/2010

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